A Tool-Kit
for
Service- Learning
Partners

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I.   The Purpose of the Tool-kit

The purpose of this tool-kit is to introduce and assist community-based organizations in developing service projects that mutually benefit students and the community.

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II.   What is Service –Learning?

Service-Learning **is a teaching method which combines community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility. Service-Learning programs involve students in organized community service that addresses local needs, while developing their academic skills, civic responsibility and commitment to the community.**

–Campus Compact National Center for Community Colleges

Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning

An effective and sustained program:
- **Engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good.**
- **Provides structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience.**
- **Articulates clear service and learning goals for everyone involved.**
- **Allows for those with needs to define those needs.**
- **Clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organization involved.**
- **Matches service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes changing circumstances.**
- **Expects genuine, active, and sustained organizational commitment.**
- **Includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals.**
- **Insures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interest of all involved.**
- **Is committed to program participation by and with diverse populations.**

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III. A Win-Win for The Community and Students

Community Partner Benefits

- Achieve agency goals by utilizing students' services, at no cost to the agency.
- Service-Learning projects can provide additional support and help for community–based organizations.
- Provides the agency with the message that students care about the well-being of the clients they serve.
- Students can offer a new perspective on projects and provide alternative solutions.
- Students involved in Service-Learning projects become life-long activist for the organization.
- Increase awareness of the potential resources that schools/colleges have to offer.

Student Benefits

- Realize they can make a difference within the community.
- Achieve a greater understanding of course content by building a bridge between theory and it's application in practice.
- Gain new skills and leadership experience that will prepare students for future careers.
- Increase understanding of socials issues and create alternative solutions.
- Teaches the importance of cultural diversity, while developing social responsibility.
- Develop skills that promote cooperation while teaching responsibility.

Key Elements of Successful Service-Learning Partnerships

- Shared Vision or Objectives for the Project
- Clear and Frequent Communication
- Clear Expectations and Roles Outlined
- Planned and Designed Together
- A Well Planned Project

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IV. How Ready is Your Agency for Service-Learning?

Readiness Checklist

There is no simple checklist of what you need to do to get involved in Service-Learning. It all depends on your organization's realities, needs in the community and available partners. Here are some of the things that are important to have in place—or to create—when developing a program. For each one, mark the level of readiness you perceive. Then look for patterns.

1. How much have you worked with volunteers (youth or adults) on other projects?

A lot	Some	None

2. How much experience does your organization have in forming partnerships with other agencies, schools or businesses?

A lot	Some	None

3. Is someone eager to be a champion for Service-Learning within your organization? Is she or he available to work with students?

Eager	Willing	Reluctant

4. Do you see youth as a valuable resource for your organization? Do you believe youth will bring fresh ideas and approaches that will help you better address community needs?

Viewed as resources	Neutral	Viewed as problems

5. How much access do you have to supervisors for students?

Plenty	Some	Little

6. How much experience has your organization had in working with teenagers or children (such as in youth groups, Scouts or families)?

A lot	Some	None

7. How diverse are the volunteer opportunities already available for people of all ages in your organization?

Lots of diversity	Some diversity	Only 1 or 2 roles

8. How much does your organization use well-defined job descriptions for volunteers?

Always	Sometimes	Never

9. How open is your organization to involving youth in decision-making roles in the organization once they have shown their commitment to your organization's mission?

Very	Somewhat	Not at all

10. How readily could students apply what they would do in your organization to what they are learning in school to real-life situations?

Very	Somewhat	Not at all

11. How strong are your contacts in schools who could facilitate a service-learning partnership?

Very	Somewhat	Not at all

12. How willing is your organization to provide release time for staff to meet with school faculty and attend training in Service-Learning?

Very	Somewhat	Not at all

13. How clear is your organization's mission (with clearly defined target groups and strategies for addressing specific needs)?

Very	Somewhat	Not at all

14. How appropriate and accessible are your facilities to the age and skill levels of youth who will be providing services?

Very	Somewhat	Not at all

15. How flexible is your organization to design services to fit students' schedules?

Very	Somewhat	Not at all

16. How prepared is your organization to spend the planning time needed to help youth translate their service experiences to their class work and vice versa?

Very	Somewhat	Not at all

Discussion Starter Questions for Building Service-Learning Partnerships

Here are some questions to help you start conversations between schools and agencies. You can use them informally, or they can be used to build community and understanding at the beginning of partnership meetings.

For Agencies to Ask Schools

- **What experiences have you had in community service or volunteering? What impact have those experiences had on you?**
- **Why are you interested in this partnership?**
- **What do you think is the most important reason for involving youth in Service-Learning?**
- **How could Service-Learning help you address major challenges you face in educating students?**
- **If you could make one dream come true through Service-Learning, what would it be?**
- **What is the one thing you hope your students would learn about our community and society?**

For Schools to Ask Agencies

- **What have been your organization's experiences in working with schools?**
- **What have been your experiences in working with children and teenagers in your agency?**
- **Why are you interested in this partnership?**
- **What do you think is the most important reason for involving youth in Service-Learning through your organization?**
- **What are the major challenges you face in providing services to our community?**
- **If you could make one dream come true for those served through your agency, what would it be?**
- **What is the one thing you hope Service-Learning will accomplish in our community and society?**

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V. Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities

As you begin planning a Service-Learning project, sit down with teachers, agency staff, youth leaders, and others to clarify roles and responsibilities. Some tasks may be most appropriately handled by the school, while others are better handled by the agency. The following questions can be used to begin the discussion:

- What expectations does the agency have of the school/student? What expectations does the school have of the agency?
- Who is responsible for developing job descriptions?
- Who will work with parent/guardians and obtain appropriate permission?
- Who is responsible for supervision?
- How will the school ensure that the learning components are being addressed?
- What process will be used to evaluate results and how will feedback be provided to the students?
- What, if anything, is needed from the agency to document the service for academic credit?
- How will discipline and emergencies be handled?
- What role will the school and agency take in reflection and evaluation?
- How will concern on the part of either the school or the agency be handled?
- Who is responsible for transportation, insurance and so forth, if they are needed?
- What will be done to celebrate the successful completion of the project?

Things to Consider When Developing a Service-Learning Partnership

- How does the student benefit academically from the project?
- Is there a balance between the agency's needs and students' abilities?
- Have you assessed the length of the project?
- Do you have on-site staff that enjoy working with students and are able to provide supervision and evaluation?
- Are your service projects designed to fit students' class and semester schedules?
- Does your organization have well-defined job descriptions for volunteers?

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Benchmarks for Service-Learning/Community Partnerships

STAGE I: Designing the Partnership

Genuine democratic partnerships are:
- **Founded on a shared vision and clearly articulated values.**
- **Beneficial to partnering institutions.**

STAGE II: Building Collaborative Relationships

- **Composed of interpersonal relationships based on trust and mutual respect.**
- **Multi-dimensional: they involve the participation of multiple sectors that act in service of a complex problem.**
- **Clearly organized and led with dynamism.**

STAGE III: Sustaining Partnerships Over Time

- **Integrated into the mission and support systems of the partnering institutions.**
- **Sustained by a "partnership process" for communication, decision-making, and the initiation of change.**
- **Evaluated regularly with a focus on both methods and outcomes.**
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VI. How to get involved...

These are some web sites you may want to check out!

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
http://www.deses.state.mo.us/
   Missouri List of K-12 grant sites, CBO Recognition, Additional Resources

Learn and Serve America /Corporation for National Service (L&SA)
http://www.cns.gov/
   National Web site for the program

The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
http://www.servicelearning.org/
   Print resources on any topic related to service-learning

National Campus Compact
www.compact.org
   See what is happening at the university level in regards to service-learning.

American Association for Higher Education
www.aahe.org
   Service-Learning books and resources

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VII. Service-Learning Project Models

These are some Service-Learning Programs in K-12 schools around the state.

Warrensburg - Students in the foreign language classes translated medical brochures and forms from English to Spanish to help local doctors and hospitals communicate with the large influx of Hispanic people in the community. They also put some of this information on video for the non-reading community members.

Bolivar -The Health classes conduct community health fairs in which they check blood pressure, pulse, height and weight, vision and hearing screenings.

Fulton - Kindergarten classes studying plant life grew seeds in flowerpots; they decorated the pots and gave them to a local nursing home.

Eldon - The 2nd graders are collecting soda tabs to be donated to the Ronald McDonald House. The tabs are used during their math classes to teach addition, subtraction, weight, and measurement.

Oak Ridge - In learning about energy and conservation, students in Principles of Technology classes are doing energy and lighting audits of the school buildings and presenting this information in displays at basketball games where many parents and community members can view their work.

Springfield - Students run a recycling center called the Etc. Center. Students are learning English skills in creating brochures and letters about the center as well as the value of recycling.

Republic - Students in a Special Education American Government Class created a video and presented information to 80 students in a senior level class stressing the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Students presented information on where to register to vote and encourage the seniors to vote.

Pattonville - Students in the New Friends Club teach 3rd graders about Downs Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy and other disabilities during their own study on this subject. They help elementary students become more sensitive toward the hearing impaired students and siblings with disabilities.

Blue Eye- Students in pre-algebra class mapped out the right-of-way along Highway 13, south of their school. The map will be used by the MO State Highway Department to determine the placement of sidewalks.

Hickman Mills – Students interviewed veterans from their families and community, studied the history of the war in which the veteran fought, visited veterans in the hospital, and presented their experience in a power point presentation at the Service-Learning National Conference for others to learn about their project.

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